

The Preservation of Ancient Cottages.

By P. H. DITCHFIELD.

ONE of the many great services the Royal Society of Arts has rendered to our country is its latest effort to preserve the ancient cottages of England, many of which are falling into decay and quickly vanishing away. At the beginning of the year the society called a meeting together "to assist in the establishment of a substantial fund for application on the broadest national lines in furtherance of this movement." I had the privilege of attending the meeting, and hearing the admirable speeches that were delivered. The resolution was proposed by the Prime Minister of England, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, in an eloquent address, in the course of which he said that "Nothing is more characteristic of England's countryside than the cottage homes which for century upon century have sheltered the sturdy sons of toil. Who has not felt a thrill of admiration on catching sight of some old-world village round a bend of the road? The roofs, whether thatched or tiled, the walls, weatherboarded or half-timbered, or of Cotswold stone, have been built with material ready to the hand of the craftsman, and painted with the delicate piquancy only to be found on the palette of Father Time, have grown amid their surroundings just as naturally as the oaks and elms under whose shade they stand. They are part of our country, part of our inheritance, part of our national life. No other country in the world has anything to compare with them. Ought we not, then, to be proud of them, to protect them, to do everything in our power to save them from decay?" And then the Prime Minister proceeded to show how badly we have treated them, how neglect has ruined them, how some owners have no sense of beauty, and so he launched his appeal. This was supported by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Right Hon. Sir Alfred Mond, M.P. It has had a noble response, and as a result of the first appeal over £4,607 has been collected. But this sum is not enough to accomplish all that is desired; more is required, not only in the matter of subscrip-

tions, but in discovering cottages which on account of their beauty need to be saved. For this purpose it has been decided by the Committee for the Preservation of Ancient Cottages to appoint local correspondents to assist them in obtaining information and enlisting support for the movement generally.

The services which correspondents are invited to render are :—

1. To give the society information of any cases where old cottages, etc., are threatened with destruction.

2. To make use of any opportunities which may occur for enlisting local interest and financial support for the movement, including local publicity and lecturing, for which lantern slides would be provided by the Royal Society of Arts, etc.

3. Photographs of old cottages of interest and character which are either still in existence or have been demolished or allowed to become derelict, would be very useful for propaganda purposes.

4. In the course of time, by a natural development of No. 3, the society might hope to form a fairly complete and permanent record of existing ancient cottages of interest and character, tithe-barns, etc., in each county.

5. Local correspondents are also invited to give any other assistance which from the particular knowledge of local circumstances, they may be able to render.

I have been invited to act as local correspondent for our neighbourhood, and feel some reluctance to accept the office as my time is always very much occupied, but if I may be assured of the support and assistance of my Berkshire neighbours and friends I am ready to do what I can. I should be glad if you will read carefully what is required.

I may add that the committee are anxious to find a particularly interesting specimen of cottage architecture, not too far from London to be easily visited by motorists, and in a position where it would be seen by many people, which the committee might save and repair and use for propaganda for the movement. They would be gratified if any of our readers could assist them to find such a cottage.